LYME — A COUNTRY LIFE COMMUNITY

THE RISE OF THE OLD CONNECTICUT TOWN FROM A PICTURESQUE RIVER SETTLEMENT TO AN ARTISTS' RESORT OF NATIONAL DISTINCTION

By H. S. ADAMS

Photographs by ARTHUR G. ELDREDGE

FLORENCE GRISWOLD says "Ranger began it." Very likely that distinguished artist, speaking for himself, would quite as gracefully let the credit of origin fall to "Miss Florence" as the mistress of the house that ever has been the centre of artistic Lyme is called.

In any event "Miss Florence" was on the ground first. Her home, on the beautiful elm-shaded main thoroughfare of the old Connecticut Valley town, is a fine, and even stately, Colonial mansion, with a venerable arborvitæ on either side of the walk that runs straight up from the street, and a genuine "old family" air about the place. Small wonder that it attracted Henry W. Ranger's attention in 1899 and in later years has been the frequent inspiration of the brush of one artist after another.

Ranger, one of the first artistic settlers of Lyme, spent the summer of 1899 at Miss Griswold's, and after him came William H. Howe and his nephew, Will Howe

Foote; Carlton Wiggins, Louis Paul Dessar, Clark Voorhees, Louis Cohen, Alphonse Jongers, Frank V. Dumond, Henry R. Poore, Jules Turcas, and the late Allen B. Talcott. Others followed, and still others — every summer bringing newcomers.

All the artists went to "Miss Florence's" by natural gravitation. Now, by quite as natural radiation, the earlier arrivals have scattered around Lyme and spend their summers in homes that they have either built or rented.

But with all this expansion the Griswold house remains the hearthstone of Lyme art, and "Miss Florence" the guide, philosopher, and friend of the colony. So many of the artists have left a visible impress upon it in the way of a painted panel "for remembrance," that the old mansion has developed into a show-place of an altogether unique character. Every stranger within the gates of Lyme wants to see it — and to see it is to admire it.

By far the most numerous group of these panels fills nearly every available place in the quaint old dining-room that runs the full width of the large ell of the house. And in this group the eye is pretty sure to be caught first by the long frieze that Henry R. Poore has painted on the mantelpiece on the "School of Lyme." In the lower right-hand corner are two bottles — a full one labeled "Mastic" and a "Venetian Fancy," by Robert Nisbet. Nor is this all.



A glimpse, through the quaint old front door, of the approach to the Griswold house. The picturesque arborvitae trees are very old

nearly empty one labeled "Rye." This frieze is so very narrow that the figures are necessarily quite small, but the heads have been sufficiently exaggerated to make it perfectly clear that the line-up, from right to left, is Willard L. Metcalf, Edward F. Rook, Henry W. Ranger, Carlton Wiggins, William H. Howe, Louis Cohen, Clark Voorhees, Allen B. Talcott, Cullen Yates, Frank V. Dumond, Henry R. Poore, Jules Turcas, Alphonse Jongers, Paul Dessar, Henry C. White, Will Howe Foote, "Beau" (the artist's dog), Harry Hoffman, Walter Griffin, Will S. Robinson, Arthur Heming, Frank Bicknell and Childe Hassam. A manufactured coat of arms has been painted on the fire place.

Of the other paintings that are permanent pictures of this remarkable room there is an arrangement of half a dozen, with a blank left for a seventh by Everett Warner, that occupies most of the wall space directly opposite the fireplace. To this little collection Frank Bicknell has contributed one

of his beautiful studies of the mountain laurel, which grows so luxuriantly on Flying Point, just across the little Lieutenant River. A composite landscape by Walter Griffin, Henry R. Poore, and Childe Hassam — the final touches falling to the last named—is just above it. The other paintings are "Birches," by Walter Griffin; "Sheep," by Carlton Wiggins; "Granada," by Louis Cohen, and "Sunset Glow," by Jules Turcas, and "Lyme in Winter", by Everett Warner.

At their left are four Lyme panels — a double one, "The Whippoorwill Rood," by Clark Voorhees on the door; "Spring," an old house in Lyme interestingly treated by Will S. Robinson, and "Autumn," by Chauncey Ryder. Returning to the other side of the room, a little corner cupboard on the right of the mantel has three panels by Willard L. Metcalf, "Maine Coast," "Birches," and "Chrysanthemums," on one side of it, and "Cattle," by Glenn Newell, and "Ipswich in Winter," by Henry Kenyon, on the other. At the left of the mantel the door has two decorative figure panels by Childe Hassam and the same artist has embellished that side of the mantelpiece with a dahlia study. Just around the corner from these are four wall panels: "The Singer Building at Night," by Charles Vezin, who is and called "The Fox Chase." It is a humorous take-off both business man and artist; "Sunset Glow," by Guy Wiggins; "Autumn," by Charles Morris Young, and



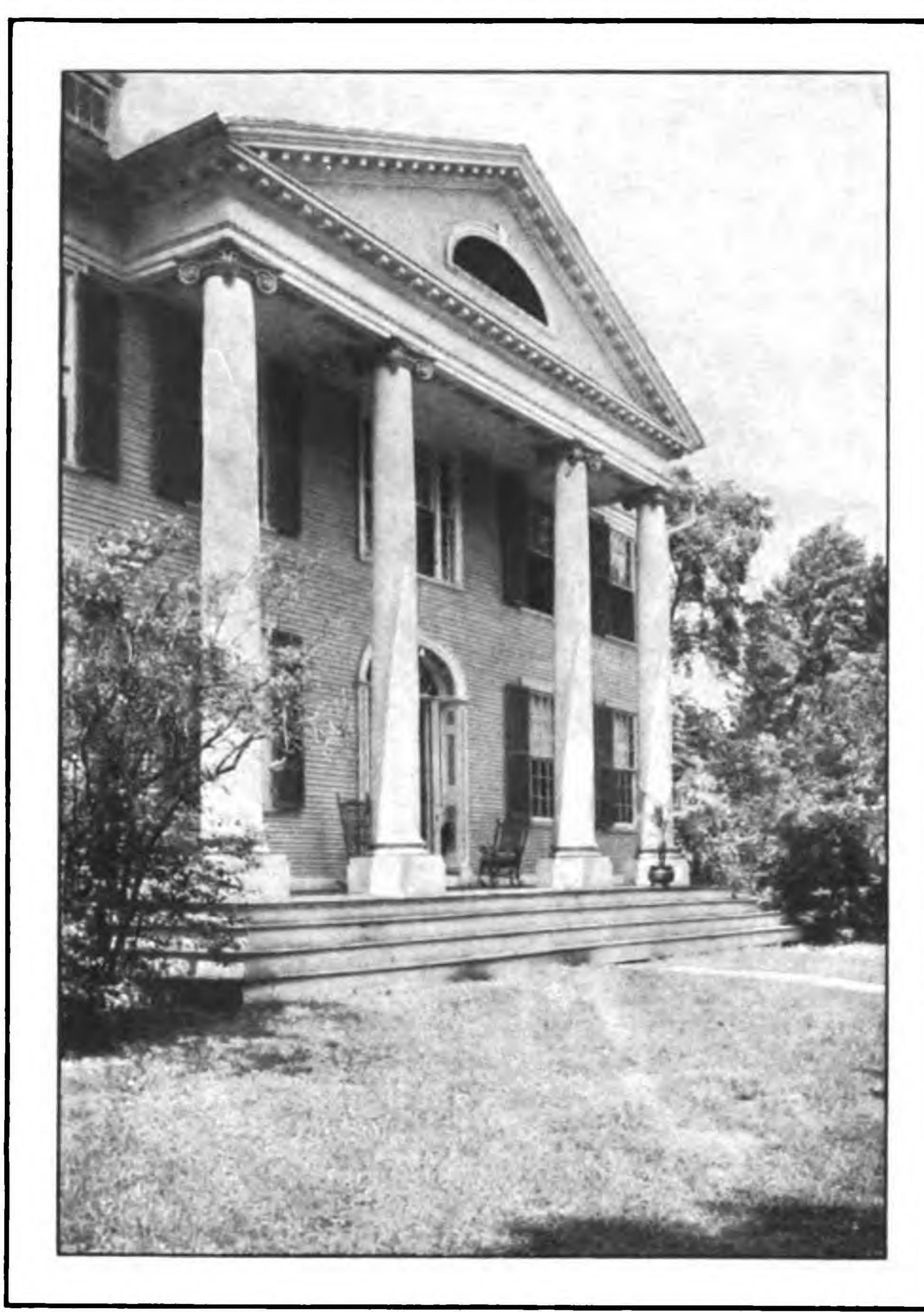
Although Allen B. Talcott is now dead, his home, with its terraced garden full of roses and old-fashioned flowers topping a large sloping field, remains a part of the artist colony at Lyme

At the right of the door leading to the piazza, which bears two Holland coast scenes by William H. Howe, are Arthur Heming's "Shooting Death Rapids," one of the illustrations that he made for the book "Spirit Lake," and Harry Hoffman's "By the River," while on the left of it is Will Howe Foote's painting of the Griswold house by moonlight. Then there is a door leading to the small hall with two panels of outdoor scenes by Gifford Beal and a figure painting by Alonzo Kimball on the right side of it and one by Willard Metcalf on the left. Still another pair of door panels show a landscape, "The Lyme Marshes," by Allen B. Talcott, and near it is a figure painting by Robert Nisbet.

In the parlor is a famous pair of panels, a Normandy stable, painted on one of the doors in 1901, by William H. Howe, while over the white

wooden mantel hangs Edward F. Rook's "The Old Mill," with a dedication to Miss Griswold on the canvas. In the main hall Louis Cohen has made two near-at-hand studies, "Woods Near the House" and "Looking Down to the Front Gate," for the door that leads into the parlor, while on the opposite door are two related panels showing a dog barking (Henry R. Poore) at the moon over Bow Bridge (Henry W. Ranger). Finally, in the too great seclusion of the little rear hall, Matilda Browne has painted an admirable pair of calves on the panels of the door.

Aside from their associations and their intrinsic value, these many artist souvenirs are interesting because they are so added to the old house as not to mar its savor of early post-Colonial times. (It was built in 1818, as the date on the knocker shows.) They fit in with the unspoiled mansion, which is furnished in keeping with its period. Largely the furnishings are ancestral, for



The home of Miss Florence Griswold, a little way out from the centre of Lyme. Here the art colony had its inception



On a door in a corner of the Griswold parlor are two remarkably fine cattle panels painted by William F. Howe in 1901

"Miss Florence" belongs to a family that has been thereabouts since the beginning of things. Here and there is something that recalls Lyme's maritime history; her father, who was Captain Robert Griswold, brought from England the four fine old prints that hang over the dining-room fireplace, and from Paris the curious porcelain liqueur cases on the parlor mantel, while the rare blue and white Canton bowl in the former room was secured by an uncle on a voyage to China years ago.

Yet with all this indoor charm the house is little used all through the long painting season excepting for sleep. Meals are served in the open air, on the spacious rear piazza at the end of the great hall. There, overlooking the garden, are set one table for the men and one for the women. This "Quaker fashion" of eating is a tradition that is never broken.



Dining-room in the Griswold house, showing the burlesque "Fox Chase" by Henry W. Poor



Another corner of the Griswold dining-room, showing an antique bureau. The door panels and hollyhocks are by Childe Hassam

Though an entirely friendly arrangement, it has the advantage of giving the men folk a certain freedom in general and the chance to indulge in "shop talk" to their heart's content. It is because of this chance that their table was long ago dubbed "The Hot Air Club," and this is the name that it always goes by.

As for painting, there are several studios, and easels and umbrellas are likely to be found set up anywhere on the spacious grounds of twenty-eight acres. The upper part of the barn has been fitted up as a studio and there are "shacks" by the brook, by the river, and in the orchard. The one among the apple trees, at the right of the garden, originally thatched and used by Louis Paul Dessar and Allen B. Talcott before they built their summer homes, was occupied during the season of 1911 by Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, who is an artist as well as the first



A glimpse of Louis Cohen's house through the old orchard, in which a stone tea table has been placed. It is 150 years old and has been remodeled by stuccoing on wire lath laid over the original clapboards

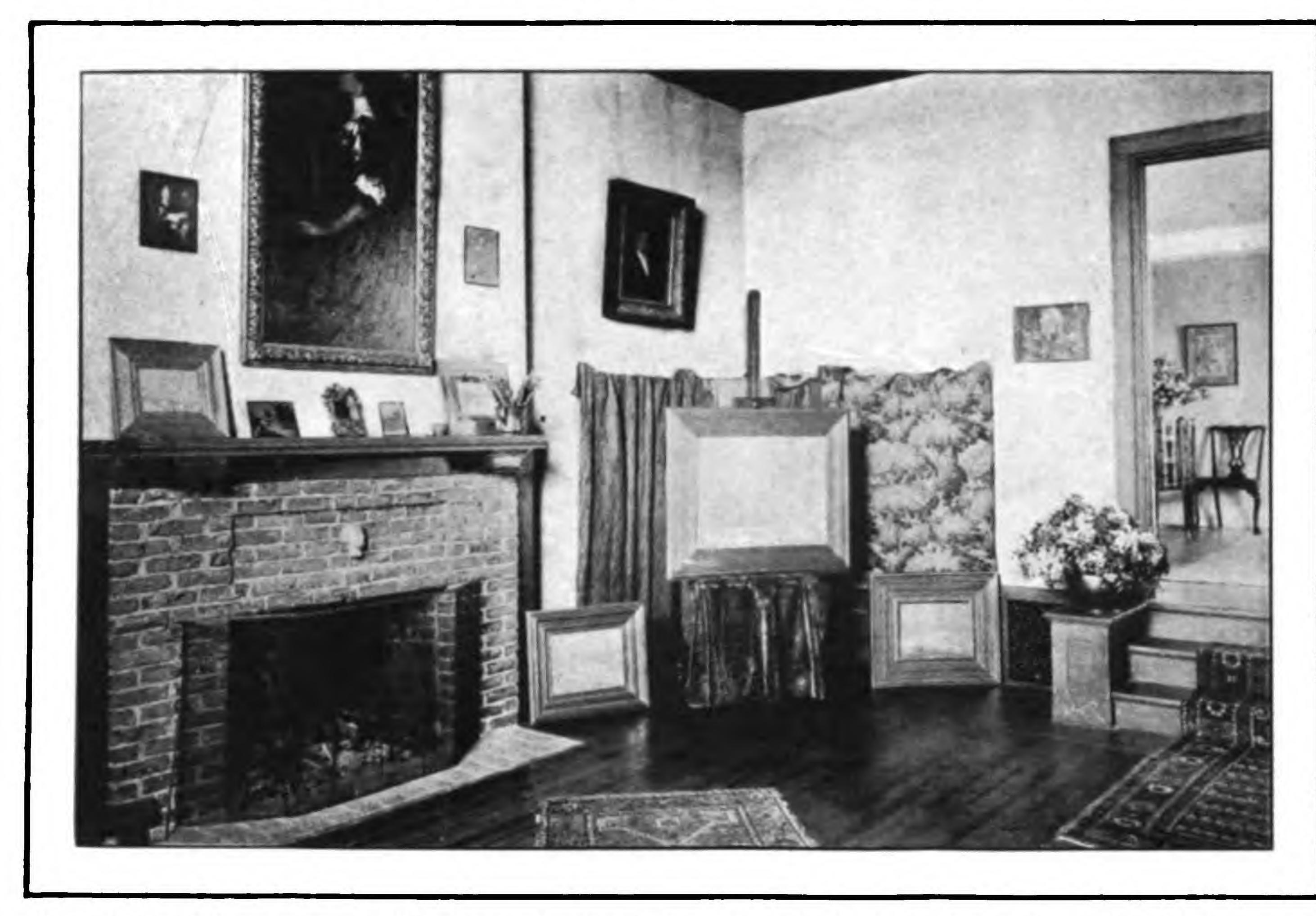


Harry Hoffman's new house, as seen from the westward. It is on the top of a hill and commands a fine view in all directions

lady of the land, and Matilda Browne. All of the studios are unpretentiousness itself; they are comfortable and rural, and no more is desired of them.

From the very beginnings of the founding of the Lyme art colony "Miss Florence" has "mothered" the artists. Her whole soul has been thrown into the idea of making her old house an attraction for the best men—a home in the truest sense where each one might feel that he owned a share of it, that the pleasure and comfort of it was his personal interest. From that "homey" atmosphere, through all the years, and the added attraction of the beautiful and "paintable" scenes in and around Lyme, it has come about that more than a dozen artists have either purchased or built most delightful homes in the neighborhood.

On Grassy Hill, in the high country overlooking Rogers Lake, Louis Paul Dessar, Frederic W. Ramsdell, Frank V. Dumond, Jules Turcas, and Bertha Sanders have summer homes. Of these the Dessar house is the first of the entirely new ones in the artists' colony. It is a picturesque house with a very sightly location in about 1,800 acres of woodland, with all the charm of remoteness without any of the inconvenience, for Mr. Dessar lessens distance and adds to his general enjoyment of country life by driving an automobile. The Ramsdell house represents the other extreme in the colony — the unspoiled old. The ancient white house by the roadside has been left just as it was found, with the quaint little front dooryard overflowing with what was once a garden. A damask rose at the left of the front door and a white one at the right are delightful reminders of a planting custom of other days. Then there are Michigan and cinnamon roses, syringas, tiger lilies, cypress spurge, lily-of-the-valley, phlox,



The studio-living-room of Will Howe Foote. Three steps lead down to it from the dining room



The Cohen house from the rear

snowball, and so on, as well as a peach tree, following their own sweet will and in some cases lodging in the dry retaining wall and the stone Apanel by Louis Cohen on

steps. At the left of the house, a fine row of big maples runs along the road, behind the stone fence. Indoors there has been little change aside from knocking out some partitions to make a larger livingroom.

Near Miss Griswold's, on Lyme Street, Will Howe Foote has built an artistic white house, that combines Italian and Colonial styles. An untouched field stretches between it and the main road and on the other

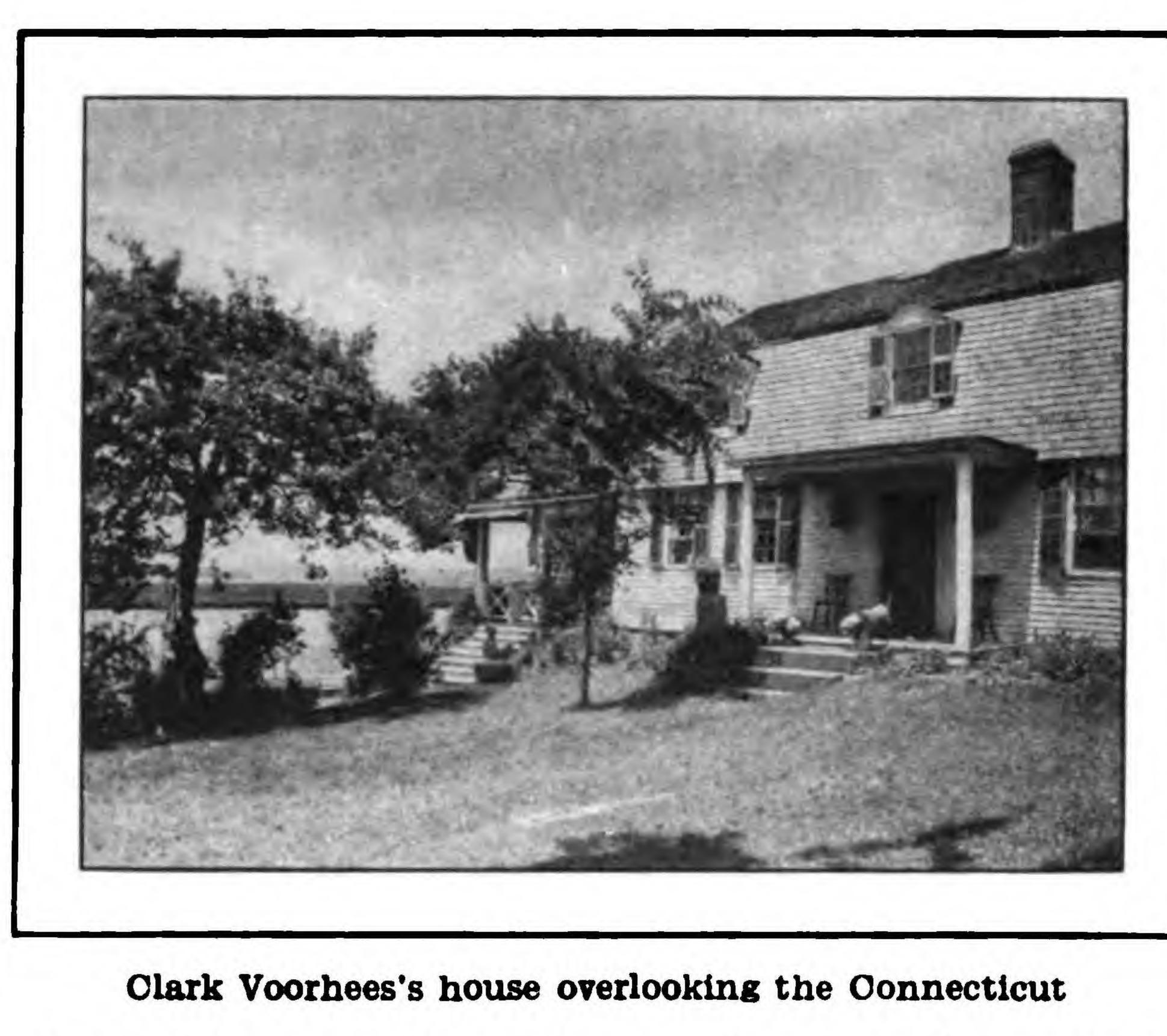
side the ground slopes down to the Lieutenant River, thus are as nature left them — with field grass, field flowers, commanding a superb view of Flying Point. When Mr. and bayberry running riot everywhere. For play Mr. Foote deserts his handsomely appointed studio in the rear and Mrs. Hoffman use their automobile. They have of the dining-room for recreation, he has the river — where settled in Lyme permanently, after a long sojourn in his canoe lies — calling him in one direction, and in the other Spain — of which country there are numerous reminders in the garden and grounds, which he and Mrs. Foote are their home, notably the two massive chairs in the hall.

gradually molding into shape. The parlor is especially interesting and vines that give the house its



one of the hall doors

On a hill overlooking the Lieutenant River and Flying Point, Will Howe Foote has built one



immediate setting, the garden consists of the somewhat unusual arrangement of a narrow rectangular border enclosing a small lawn, in the

> centre of which is embedded a great boulder. It is their intention, however, to make a winding walk to the river, with naturalistic planting all along it.

> Harry Hoffman also has a beautiful hilltop house just off the main street. This house, built of field stone with the second story of wood, commands from the piazzas on three sides one of the broadest of the Lyme views. The grounds, which slope to

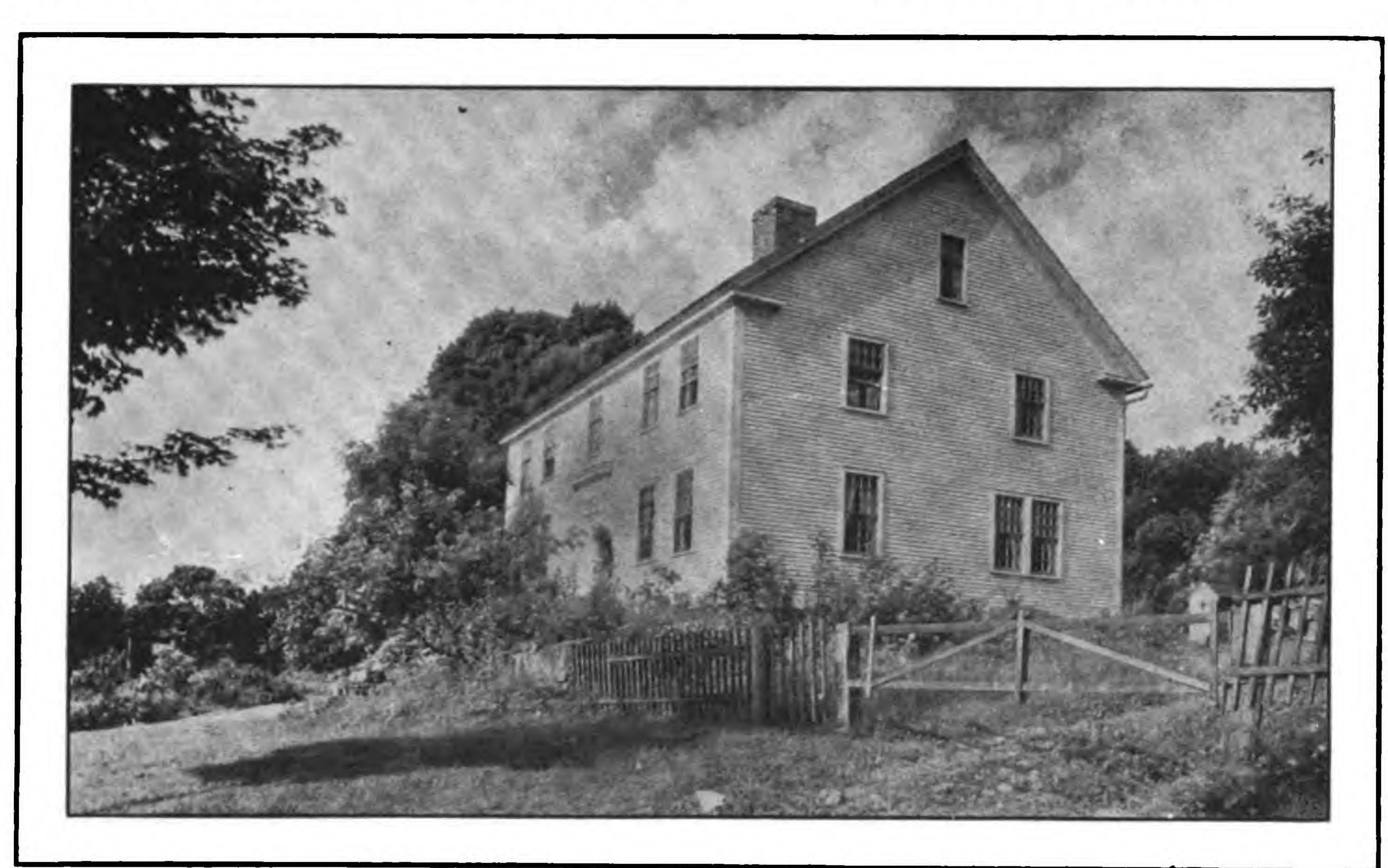
of the most artistic of the new homes, designed by Charles O. Grant a stream on one side,

Aside from the perennials, shrubs, in the consistent carrying out of a

(Continued on page 92)



A scene on the Griswold place by Cohen



Frederic W. Ramsdell purchased an old house by the roadside and left it absolutely untouched. The plants above the wall are remnants of an old garden



"The old Bow Bridge," by Henry W. Ranger



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While the gallery wing was taking shape, the front of the house was being remodeled, as shown in the small plans. The veranda gave place to a screened porch on the left front corner separate entirely from the main portico. This porch has a very charming effect with its permanent copper screening in a Palladian motif, and its Corinthian columns like those of the gallery. Meanwhile the whole front portico was rearranged to a more dignified character and better proportion by extending the hall to the front, bringing the doorway forward to where it should have been, in line with the dining-room. The roof of this hall makes a shaded balcony for the second story. The original was a miniature order of the Ionic of the portico, which was of course an architectural anachronism; but this new front uses the Corinthian pilaster of the gallery.

The whole porch and steps were embellished with a graceful Colonial railing of wrought iron; the entrance to the grounds was given a wrought-iron gate and arch following one in the Salisbury Cathedral close; and on the garden side the service parts of the house, laundry, and drying yard were enclosed in a simple but

very attractive lattice.

It will be seen that these changes on the house were very slight, as remodeling goes, and the fact shows how much can be done for unsatisfactory dwellings, with a resolute aim for safety, by the aid of an architect fertile in expedients, and understanding balance and consistency in detail. Certainly the result is a mansion stately in effect, most livable, and thoroughly equipped for the preservation of the valuable collections that it houses. It shows that even in a region of great fire hazard, irreplaceable possessions may be removed from the danger space. Such conditions would make for the increased acquisition and tranquil enjoyment of art treasures in all our inland towns.

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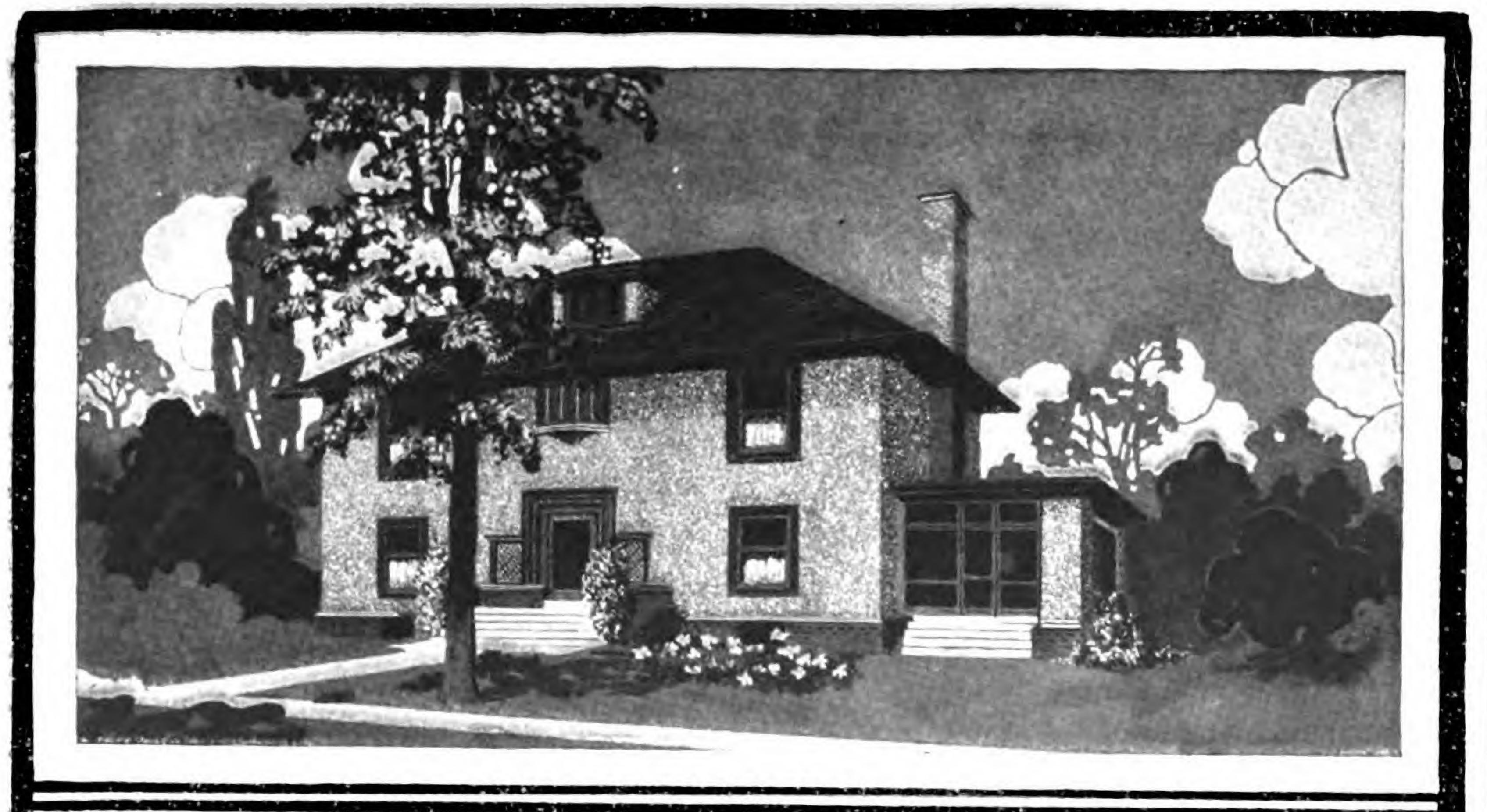
(Continued from page 50)

dull blue and gray scheme. All the woodwork is stained a soft gray, relieved by the least touch of dull gold. The furniture is gray wicker, the portieres are blue brocaded with gold and edged with gold braid, and the curtains are a thin blue fabric. Finally the artist has given the room a personal touch by painting on wood — for the space over the brick fireplace — the old bridge at Quenca in very soft tones, and also a series of marines in pastel tints on the extremely narrow panels over the doors and

at the top of the wainscoting. The home of the late Allen B. Talcott, kept up as he left it, is at the top of a long sloping field, which not only gives it view but the opportunity for a terraced garden. The house is, in fact, all flowers in front. There are borders against it, and across the driveway one steps into a most pleasant old-style garden with stone retaining walls and an utter absence of formality. Grass pinks are a favorite flower, but there are quantities of garden heliotrope, sweet rocket, yellow primroses, pyrethrum, and other perennials, and as for roses, there is a prodigality of the old and the new. The roses are especially beautiful on the lowest retaining wall, where they fall, in glorious cascades of bloom, to the

level of the field.

Of the artists who have purchased old places, Clark Voorhees has been remarkably fortunate in running across the one-time home of a sea captain, on the very shore of the "Great River." The gambrel-rocf cottage, like so many of the old New England houses, is close to the street, but it is a few feet below the sidewalk level, and what with the dry wall, the hedge, and the slope of the grounds, there is an admirable note of seclusion. A hedge, too, breaks the sharpness of the drop to Mrs. Voorhees's flower garden, which is entered by a short flight of little stone steps. It is just the sort of garden for the place, and not the least of its attractions is the view across the river to Essex. Mr. Voorhees, who likes to do things about the house himself, has made his own bookcases for the living-room and has picked up antique furnishings in keeping with the interior. As the house is small, he has a detached studio in the rear. The house is entered from the little side lawn, and there are



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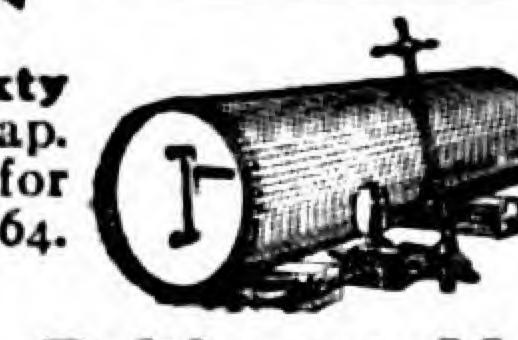
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artemisias on each side of the door and also some hardy primulas that Mrs. Voorhees dug up in Italy and brought to Lyme. A single specimen of box by the living-room window has its age fixed by the known fact that it grew from a sprig that decorated a wedding-cake sixty years ago.

George Burr's choice of a home is what for half a century, and until quite recently, was the old Van Bergen homestead on the main street. The house is early Victorian and an unusual type for an old Connecticut village. Its most distinctive architectural feature is the great gabled end that faces the broad lawn to its right. This has old latticed windows, and honeysuckles and vines are rapidly adding to its picturesqueness. The studio is a detached structure in the rear, and beyond is some of the best preserved box in all Lyme — one of the few notable remnants of old-time gardens thereabouts. This box, which has stood there fully seventy-five years, forms two very large squares, and excepting through the centre, where there are grape vines and fruit trees, there is an outer hedge of the same evergreen. Roses fill the right square and the other is massed with such perennials as foxglove, peach bell, gaillardia, and coreopsis, as well as some annuals. The particular hobby of Mr. and Mrs. Burr is old mirrors, of which they have many.

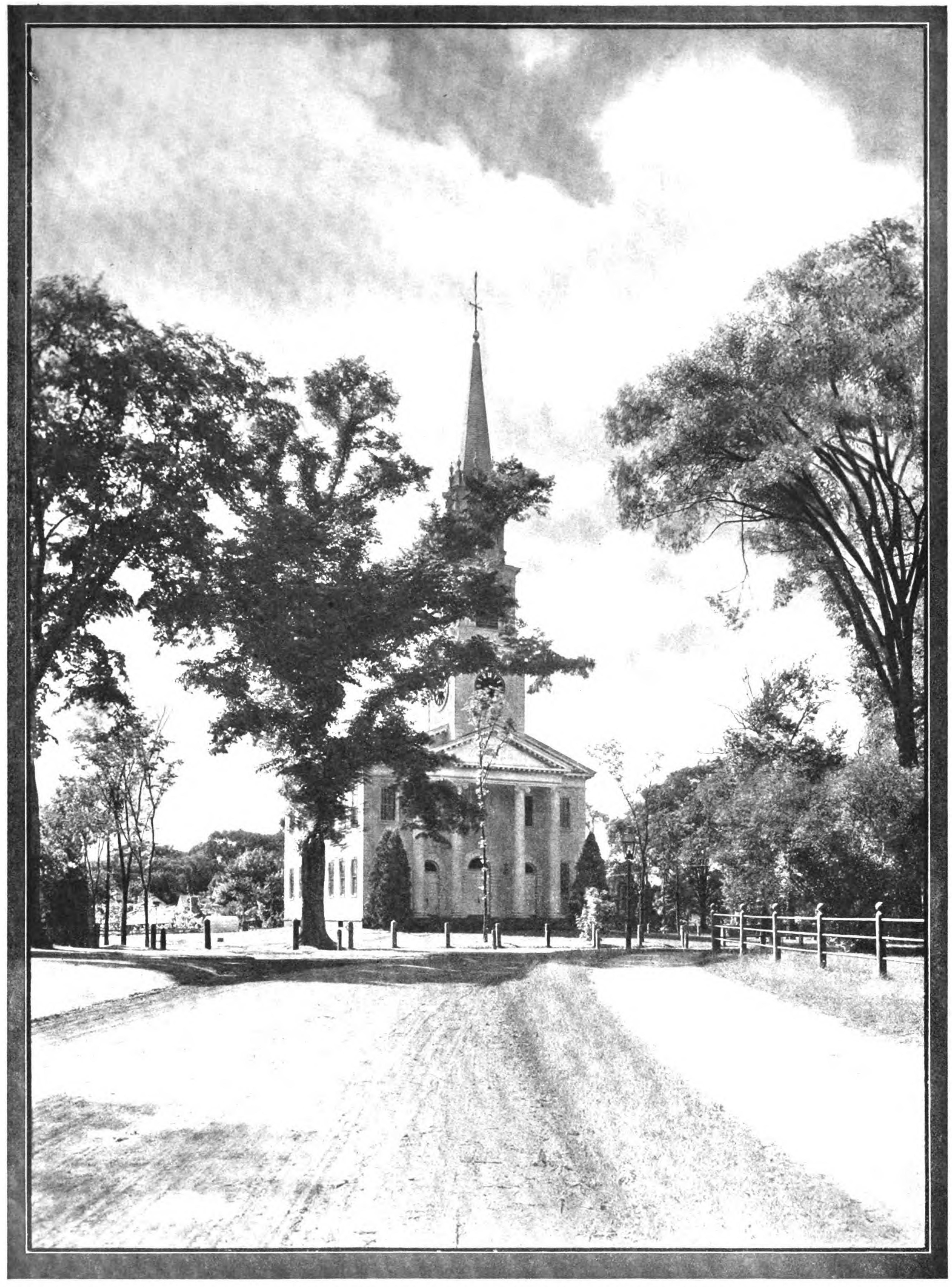
Louis Cohen's house is much older, but its 150 years have been somewhat modified by very successful treatment. Gray cement, laid on wire lath, conceals the original clapboards, and the chimneys have been cemented to correspond. The old wooden ell and adjacent well-house, however, have been left as they were, even to the ancient Concord grape vine that clambers up the former. The old orchard, too, has been left and, with its stone tea table, forms a sort of outdoor living-room. Flowers are relegated, and with excellent effect, to borders on the edge of the orchard, Mr. Cohen making more of a feature of his vegetable garden, which is a large and very tidy one, enclosed by a neat wire fence.

The Carlton Wiggins house is among the more modern of the older ones. It has its little garden, but most impressive of all are the spacious grounds with their fine trees and the orchard in which the artist so often sets up his easel. Mr. Rook intends to build near the Griswold place, but is now occupying the Sill mansion, which great trees almost conceal from the road. Some of the old box still lines the front walk, and at the side of the house lilacs and "bouncing Bet" are all that is left of a garden. Within, the living-room has only Japanese prints on the wall, and the armor in the studio is another reminder of the artist's liking for things Japanese

In the establishment of each of these offshoots of the Griswold house "Miss Florence" has taken a personal interest, extending even to the gardens, in which she has endeavored to infuse the air of yesteryear through the medium of the good old-fashioned flowers. Not one of the homes but savors of country life at its simplest and best. The interiors suggest ease and comfort, and without there is always a prodigality of room, now and then stretching away into a bit of field. More often than not the places command a wide range of view, of which Lyme offers a great variety, what with bare hills and wooded hills, pasture lands, marshes, the great river and the little river, and — across the flat country to the southward — the blue waters of Long Island Sound. Aside from the making of gardens of flowers, vegetables, and fruit, there is but little grooming of the landscape. In this respect, as well as in the building of new houses and the alteration of old ones, the prime note is the expansion of a delectable old village, quiet to the point of trolleylessness and breathing everywhere the spirit of peace and calm of typical New England.

Always at the close of summer — the week of Labor Day — the twenty or more artists in the colony ask the world to look in upon them. They exhibit at the Phœbe Griffin Noyes Memorial Library, and from far and near the world comes to see, admire, and, perchance, to buy. This exhibit once a year, and the old church all the year, are binding links of the town's centre and the art colony — which is a little way out. The First Church of Christ, burned to the ground and rebuilt two years ago, is a

veritable triumph of restoration.



THE OLD CHURCH AT LYME IN 1TS SETTING OF LOFTY ELMS AND VELVET GREEN, LONG FAMOUS AS A PERFECT PIECE OF COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE. WAS BUILT AFTER A DESIGN OF SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN. IT WAS BURNED DOWN IN 1908, BUT HAS SINCE BEEN RESTORED WITH MINUTE FIDELITY TO THE ORIGINAL